



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

JUL 01 2013

The Honorable Jeff Miller
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Miller:

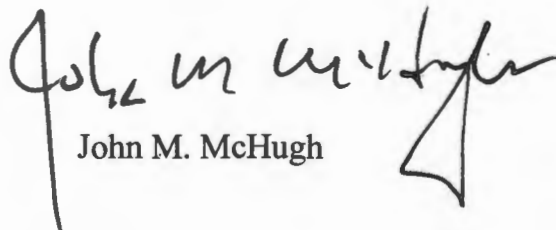
Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel asked me to respond on his behalf to your May 17, 2013 letter concerning the collection of operational records from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation New Dawn (OND). We have addressed your specific questions in the enclosure.

As the Department of Defense (DoD) Chief Information Officer noted in her January 23, 2013 letter to you, DoD takes the matter of recordkeeping for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan very seriously. DoD is currently working closely with the military departments and combatant commands to revise DoD Instruction 5015.02 (DoD Records Management Program) to explicitly clarify the roles and responsibilities for records preservation during contingency operations.

In terms of Iraq and Afghanistan war records, we are pursuing two simultaneous actions. The first is to catalogue the more than 92 terabytes of electronic data from Iraq and Afghanistan currently resident at the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH). While this collection represents an enormous amount of data, we acknowledge that gaps exist. Therefore, to ensure that we have as complete a set of Army operational records as possible, General Odierno and I have also just directed all Army elements that have served in OIF, OEF and OND to immediately begin transferring copies of their records to CMH for preservation. The goal is to have one consolidated, catalogued and searchable collection at CMH. CMH will preserve the records for historical research and make them centrally accessible to assist in responses to health-related claims from servicemembers and veterans. The efforts from both actions should give us a picture of the overall status of OEF, OIF and OND operational records by December 31, 2013.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue. Your continued support for our Army is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,


John M. McHugh

Enclosure



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JUL 01 2013

The Honorable Michael H. Michaud
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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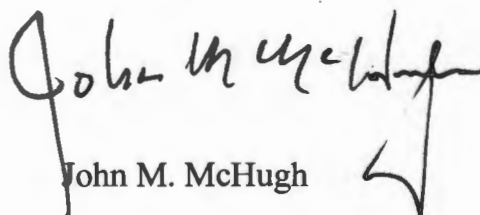
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John M. McHugh

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Question 1. *What organization has overall responsibility for collecting and maintaining operational records for the U.S. Army? How do field activities at all levels coordinate to ensure a complete accounting of operational records?*

Response: The Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army serves as the Archivist of the Army and the Director, U.S. Army Records Management and Declassification Agency (RMDA) has operational responsibility for Armywide records management and its associated programs.

Army policy states that records management is a command responsibility. As established by Army Regulation 25-1 (Army Knowledge and Information Management), commanders at all echelons are responsible for complying with records management requirements, which includes collecting and maintaining operational records. Higher headquarters/commands are responsible for ensuring a complete accounting of operational records for their subordinate units.

The collection of operational records presents unique challenges during wartime and contingency operations because of the often austere, hostile environment and high operational tempo. Although numerous directives have been issued to emphasize the importance of the preservation of records, these directives unfortunately were often overcome by other operational priorities and not fully overseen by commanders. Steps are being taken now to make sure this does not happen again.

Question 2. *Where are the operational records for the 1st Armored Division from 2003-2008, which served in the initial invasion and every year of OIF? How can they be accessed by individual servicemembers who served with that unit during that timeframe and/or by the Department of Veterans Affairs? If these records do not exist, why not? What is being done to reconstruct the records?*

Response: The 1st Armored Division and its subordinate brigades deployed from Europe to Iraq, but at the conclusion of their deployment they were restationed to Fort Bliss, Texas. In the process, some of their records and historical documents appear to have gone missing. Nevertheless, several operational records have been collected from the division.

The U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) has copies of a limited number of 1st Armored Division historical documents for the period 2003-2008 that were collected by military history detachments deployed with the division. CMH also contacted the 1st Armored Division Headquarters and its individual brigades after those units returned to home station multiple times, which yielded copies of additional operational records. Although incomplete, those historical documents provide some information on the operational activities of the division and its brigades during their deployments to Iraq. An additional Army-wide call for records may increase this collection.

See the response to question #5 for additional details on obtaining copies of records for use by veterans, servicemembers and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Enclosure

Question 3. *Where are the operational records from the 82nd Airborne Division's multiple deployments during OIF/OND? How can they be accessed by individual servicemembers who served with that unit during the timeframe and/or by the Department of Veterans Affairs? If these records do not exist, why not? What is being done to reconstruct the records?*

Response: Only a limited number of records appear to be available from the 82nd Airborne Division's many operational deployments. For a variety of reasons, military history detachments were not deployed with the division and therefore that supplement to traditional records management yielded nothing. The 82nd Division Headquarters deployed to Iraq only once; all subsequent deployments were to OEF in Afghanistan and CMH did collect some of those operational records. In addition, the division's brigades often deployed independently. Subsequent attempts to collect documents from the division and its brigades during operations in Iraq and after redeployment to their home station were largely unsuccessful.

See the response to question #5 for additional details on obtaining copies of records for use by veterans, servicemembers and the VA.

Question 4. *Why are nearly 50 brigades and at least 2 entire divisions, according to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, missing their operational records from OEF/OIF/OND?*

Response: We cannot confirm the accuracy of this assertion. We believe the statistics cited likely came from a set of working papers developed in 2008 that provide only a rough snapshot of a particular time. By early 2008, CMH held what it considered to be a robust set of historical documents for at least 45 brigades and many other units; it lacked historical documents from only 17 brigades that had deployed to either OEF or OIF. CMH also held documents for 74 other brigades, but not enough to serve as a complete record of those brigades' operations. Currently, CMH has collected more than 92 terabytes of digital data, large amounts of paper documents and more than 8,000 oral history interviews from OEF, OIF and OND and is assessing this collection to identify any remaining gaps.

Question 5. *As of today, where are the surviving operational records of the U.S. Army from OEF/OIF/OND? How accessible are they for use in veterans' compensation and pension claims? How can they be accessed by individual servicemembers who served with that unit during that timeframe and/or by the Department of Veterans Affairs?*

Response: Contingency operations records reside in many electronic repositories and databases and on computer servers maintained by a number of Army and other Department of Defense (DoD) agencies. In addition to the more than 92 terabytes of digital records and paper documents from OEF, OIF and OND that CMH has amassed, large numbers of specialized collections relating to recent overseas contingency operations, including unit after action reports, significant activity reports, commanders'

papers and lessons learned reports, are retained at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Center for Army Lessons Learned, U.S. Army TRADOC Analysis Center and Combat Studies Institute. It is important to note that individual Soldier's health and service records are kept separately from unit records and are available to the VA.

Servicemembers may obtain copies of operational records by submitting a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the unit they served with or when filing a claim with the VA. If a servicemember files a claim for health-related benefits, the VA can access the individual's medical and personnel records through its established process, and work with the Military Services to obtain the necessary documents to help substantiate the claim. In some instances a unit will not have the requested records in its possession and will issue a "no record" response under FOIA. The Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army have recently signed a directive mandating all Army elements that have served in OEF, OIF and OND to immediately begin transferring their records to CMH to ensure the preservation of existing records and make documents much more accessible.

When the VA requires additional documentation from the Military Services to validate a servicemember's claim, the VA requests verification from the Joint Services Records Research Center (JSRRC). JSRRC researches operational records from throughout the Army to validate the claim. Each month, JSRRC receives and processes an average of 50 OEF, OIF and OND claims requests for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from the VA, locates relevant documentation for 91 percent of the cases and provides its findings to the VA for claims adjudication.

Question 6. *How much Federal funding has been dedicated to developing the Army Records Information Management System (ARIMS), meant as an archive for Army records and housed within the U.S. Army's Records Management and Declassification Agency at Fort Belvoir, Virginia?*

Response: ARIMS was developed during 2003 to facilitate a variety of automated solutions for Army records management processes. The total amount of funding provided was \$230,000 in 2003 when the archive was established and made operational. Current annual operational costs are approximately \$29,753.

ARIMS is a parent information technology system with several Army enterprise applications and operational modules supporting all of RMDA's mission areas. In addition to the Army enterprise records management system, ARIMS hosts the Army Declassification Automated Management System, the Army FOIA Case Tracking system, the JSRRC Claims Automated Operating System, and a number of modules such as the FOIA Reading Room, Army Electronic Archive (AEA), Digital Asset Finder, Army addresses and office symbols online.

Question 7. *Of the U.S. Army operational records currently stored within ARIMS, is there an accessible index to those records so that they can be used in developing veterans' claims?*

Response: Yes, ARIMS has a searchable master index for records. JSRRC personnel have individual accounts and are able to identify and access records. By entering various document identifiers, they can use the search function to retrieve and review the operational records for their relevant content.

In addition, JSRRC maintains the Digital Asset Finder application in ARIMS, which is an electronic records repository with retrieval capability that RMDA specifically developed to maintain copies of contingency operations records to support JSRRC's research. This application is continuously uploaded with records as JSRRC collects them for individual claims, as well as records collected as the result of organized records collection activity. Currently, JSRRC is accessing OEF, OIF and OND electronic records in U.S. Army Central Command's Combined Information Data Network Exchange, downloading records from the U.S. Army National Ground Information Center's Anti-Armor Incident Reporting System, and harvesting military unit records posted on classified Web sites.

Question 8. *Were commanders in Iraq under orders from the Department of Defense to regularly transmit operational records to the ARIMS system? If so, why were these records not routinely transmitted?*

Response: DoD did not order commanders to regularly transmit operational records to ARIMS. ARIMS is an Army only system. Nevertheless, operational records were sent to and are held in a number of DoD repositories at U.S. Central Command, U.S. Army Central, the Center for Army Lessons Learned, CMH, RMDA, and so on.

Question 9. *Understanding that millions of records appear to be lost, based on the U.S. Army's own inventory, what are the plans to try to recreate those records for the benefit of veterans, the telling of the national experience, criminal investigations or as protection from lawsuits?*

Response: The Army is taking a two-pronged approach. First, CMH has been funded to implement an automated solution to index and search all the operational records in its possession.

Second, the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army recently issued a directive mandating that all Army elements that have served in OEF, OIF and OND immediately begin transferring their records—regardless of the medium, including paper and electronically stored information on computer systems and removable or portable electronic storage media—to CMH. CMH will access this data to determine the "completeness" of the Army operational records collection from OIF, OEF and OND.

CMH will safeguard all these operational records and make sure they will be accessible for the benefit of veterans, the telling of the national experience, criminal investigations or as protection from future legal proceedings.

Question 10. *How often does the Joint Services Records Research Center, which services requests from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), find that U.S. Army operational records are missing?*

Response: JSRRC locates and provides relevant documentation for 91 percent of the OEF, OIF and OND cases it receives from the VA, which considers this documentation part of its overall claims adjudication process. To a large extent, the outcome of a disability claim depends on the accuracy of the information the veteran provides to the VA and the other relevant documentation the VA collects (for example, military medical and dental records, military personnel files, DoD finance records, other Federal agency records, civilian medical records, civilian public records, etc.).

Question 11. *Are National Guard and Reserve operational records missing or incomplete at a higher rate?*

Response: Historical documents for OEF, OIF and OND appear to have been collected for the National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve at much the same rate as for regular Active Army units. In most cases, National Guard and Reserve units were attached to or supported regular Army units, so it is probable that active and reserve component records were collected at similar rates.

Question 12. *Why was the Department of the Army Historical Advisory Committee eliminated considering its minimal operating costs and vital role in revealing and monitoring the broken recordkeeping system of the Army during wartime?*

Response: The Department of the Army Historical Advisory Committee (DAHAC) was eliminated when the Office of the Secretary of Defense eliminated the parent committee, the DoD Historical Advisory Committee, because it was a subordinate organization.

The Army is in the process of reestablishing DAHAC as a subordinate organization of the Department of the Army Education Committee.